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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC277

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in the Herring Savings Areas of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels using trawl gear in the Winter Herring Savings Area of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2012 herring bycatch allowance specified for the midwater trawl pollock fishery in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 1, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 1, 2013.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation

and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2012 herring bycatch allowance specified for the midwater trawl pollock fishery in the BSAI is 1,600 metric tons as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (77 FR 10669, February 23, 2012).

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the 2012 herring bycatch allowance specified for the midwater trawl pollock fishery in the BSAI has been caught. Consequently, in accordance with § 679.21(e)(7)(vi), NMFS is closing directed fishing for pollock by vessels using trawl gear in the Winter Herring Savings Areas of the BSAI. The Winter Herring Savings Area of the BSAI is that part of the Bering Sea subarea that is between 58° N latitude and 60° N latitude and between 172° W longitude and 175° W longitude.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of directed for pollock by vessels using trawl gear in the Winter Herring Savings Areas of the BSAI.

NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of September 28, 2012.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: October 1, 2012

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Lindsay Fullenkamp,  
Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable  
Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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